

**First-Year Experience  
Seminars  
2012-13**

**Fall 2012**

**Japanese Anime**

**Dr. Mary McCay**

**Department of English**

Anime, the popular art form pioneered in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Japan, reveals much about Japan's historical and contemporary values, politics, technology, and attitudes toward social justice. Students will analyze Anime in its cultural contexts and learn how American adaptations reflect issues in 21<sup>st</sup> century U.S. culture.

**The World of Tim Burton**

**Dr. Mary McCay**

**Department of English**

Director and producer Tim Burton is famous for films such as *Edward Scissorhands*, *Ed Wood*, and his darkly re-imagined *Alice in Wonderland* that explore "excitement, mystery, discovery, life, and death." He is also a whimsical and disturbing artist and a writer of lyrical poetry and prose. Students will view the art, read the writings and watch the films to understand how contemporary culture speaks to the need for imaginative approaches to difficult social issues.

**East of Eden: Exploring the Medieval World**

**Dr. John Sebastian**

**Department of English**

Medieval Europeans' encounters with the fabled "others" of the East produced stories of marvels, monsters and miracles, stories that reveal much about notions of identity in the middle ages. Through reading and analysis of maps, epic poetry, travelogues, cookbooks, and other texts and visual documents, students will learn about medieval concepts of identity and re-think assumptions about their own identity, especially with respect to ethnicity, race, gender, class, religion, nationality, and culture.

**Ethical Eating**

**Ms. Kristin Sanders**

**Department of English**

The choices we make about what we eat as well as the production, marketing, and merchandising of food have far-reaching ethical implications. Through books, articles, films, and field trips to New Orleans' grocery stores, farmers markets, and community supported agriculture (CSA) sites, the course explores the concept of ethical eating with particular reference to the New Orleans community. Ultimately, each student will answer the following question: What is the most ethical option for eating in New Orleans, and why?

**Creole Crossroads**

**Dr. Judith Hunt**

**Department of History**

New Orleans mixture of African, Caribbean, and European culture, forged through early European settlement, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the revolution in St. Domingue, and waves

of international immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries make the city unique. By focusing on the music, food, literature, religious practices, and Carnival traditions of New Orleans, the seminar traces the historical threads that converged in this cultural crossroads to create a city like no other.

### **Disease and Healing in New Orleans**

**Dr. Christi Sumich**

**Department of History**

On May 28, 1853, a New Orleans paper carried the headline “Disease: an Obsolete Idea.” That same day the first victim of a devastating yellow fever epidemic died. Have you ever wondered what it was *really* like to live in nineteenth-century New Orleans, complete with mosquitoes, raw sewerage, and smells that defy words? This course will trace the facts and the myths about disease and healthcare in that early era up to the present in post-Katrina New Orleans.

### **Food and Food Justice in New Orleans (UHP) (2 sections in the fall)**

**Dr. Justin Nystrom**

**Department of History**

**Dr. Sue Mennino**

**Department of Sociology**

**\*This course is open to HONORS students only.**

**\*This course requires service learning.**

Despite the issues that divide New Orleanians, they share a proud culinary tradition rooted in great ethnic diversity. Coming together over signature dishes, from muffalettas to shrimp creole, from rice calas to Banh Pho is a treasured cultural ritual that forges communal bonds. This course explores the ethnic, environmental, and historical forces that have made food a source of community in the Crescent City.

### **Climate Change Ethics (2 sections in the fall)**

**Dr. Ian Smith**

**Department of Philosophy**

Remember the devastation that Hurricane Katrina caused? This deadly hurricane has been linked to global climate change, and most climate scientists say that we can expect more of the same as the world’s seas grow warmer. Drawing on moral philosophy, economics, political science, and climate science, this course examines the global, generational, and individual ethical issues that arise in the context of climate change.

### **Forming the Self: in the Steps of Ignatius Loyola**

**Sylvester Tan, S. J.**

**Department of Languages and Cultures**

**\*This course requires service learning.**

The formation of the self is central to Ignatian thought: that every idea, experience, action, and relationship contribute to forming who we are. The course explores this concept through Ignatius Loyola’s spiritual exercises and writings, the writings of Plato, Augustine and others, and formative experiences that range from Japanese tea ceremonies and music appreciation to ropes course activities and field trips.

### **Images of Latin America in Film**

**Dr. Leopoldo Tablante**

**Department of Languages and Cultures**

Representations of Latin America in American films reveal much about American attitudes toward the Latin American world. Images of Latin characters as exotic, highly sexualized, and dangerous uncover the fears that underlie discrimination against Latin Americans both inside and outside the U.S. The course explores these themes and the social justice issues implicit in them.

### **The Pity of War**

**Dr. Denis Janz**

**Department of Religious Studies**

Why does our species regularly engage in orgies of collective violence and mass killing? Why, when the cost of war is so appalling, have we not discovered a better way? What have the great Western religions said about the morality of war? This course addresses these perennial questions against the background of wars in the history of the West, from tribal war in the ancient near east to today's "war on terror."

### **What Does the Bible REALLY Say?**

**Dr. Robert Gnuse**

**Department of Religious Studies**

The public arena is rife with religious concepts, opinions, and beliefs, many of which have little to do with the real message of the Bible. This course focuses on popular misconceptions about the Bible and helps students develop a healthy skepticism about popular religious discourse. Emphasizing critical thinking approaches, the course helps students learn what the Bible actually teaches and says.

### **Social Justice and the Wire**

**Dr. Boyd Blundell**

**Department of Religious Studies**

**\*This course requires service learning.**

The dominant theme of 20<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic Teaching is the problem of structural injustice. This course examines this theme through the critically acclaimed series, *The Wire*. Readings from Church documents and contemporary authors support *The Wire*'s exploration of social justice.

### **iBrains**

**Mr. Brad Petitfils**

**Department of Psychology**

Our lives are becoming more complicated by the barrage of graphics, audio, and video that comes to us through our time online. What's worse, our attention spans are becoming shortened as we experience more of life through "the screen." In short, technology is changing everything about the way we live and learn in the 21st century. This course explores the difference between information and knowledge and, in general, the role that technology (reality TV, games, Wikipedia, social networking, YouTube, etc.) plays in that distinction. By the end of the course, we will decide whether traditional theories of learning and human development might need revision in our "hyperreal" present.

### **How to Do the Right Thing: Perspectives on Morality**

**Dr. Kendall Eskine**

**Department of Psychology**

The ability to make moral choices is one of the things that make us human. But what is the source of the moral sense? This course explores the sources of moral judgments and actions from psychological, evolutionary, philosophical, religious, and literary perspectives, highlighting the status of emotions in moral judgments and the connection between moral thinking and moral doing (social justice).

### **Gender Play: Becoming Men and Women**

**Dr. Karen Reichard**

**Department of Women's Studies**

Though we don't usually realize it, we perform gender in our everyday lives, through our clothing, gestures, speech patterns, and other behaviors. This course examines how individuals, influenced by society's institutions, are drawn into the performance of gender as spectators, script writers, performers, and critics and explores how these performances can both empower and control us.

### **Diversity in Society**

**Ms. Liv Newman**

**Department of Sociology**

**\*This course requires service learning.**

As Americans, we pride ourselves on the diversity of our nation. But what do we really mean? With our commitment to diversity as an ideal, how do we reconcile the inequities around us? This course challenges you to think critically about how diversity shapes our identities, our beliefs, and our daily lives.

### **Gender and Mardi Gras**

**Dr. Sue Mennino**

**Department of Sociology**

Sociologists see gender as a socially constructed set of relations that is not "natural" but instead is reproduced as we go about our daily lives. This course explores the social construction of gender in Mardi Gras celebrations worldwide, from New Orleans to Rio, Sydney, and other locales, focusing on gender differences in participation in Mardi Gras festivities including balls, parades, costumes, krewe membership, art and music.

### **Political Satire: Speaking 'Truthiness' to Power**

**Dr. Philip Dynia**

**Department of Political Science**

Satire as political protest can be traced to the earliest days of American government. This course traces the uses, power, and historical significance of satire from such famous satirists as Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain to the contemporary satire of Jon Stewart, Stephen Colbert, and Michael Moore, and others.

**Rebuilding New Orleans****(Cardoner LC)****Dr. Peter Burns****Department of Political Science**

This course allows students to study and participate in the rebuilding of New Orleans post-Katrina through research on issues of policy and politics that this rebuilding has generated. Education, housing and economic development are highlighted from the perspectives of race and class.

**Dishing it Up: the Business of Food in New Orleans****Dr. Frankie Weinberg****Department of Management**

New Orleans' cuisine is world famous, and residents are proud of the diverse roots of our food traditions: Creole, Cajun, Italian, Vietnamese, Caribbean and French—the list goes on. Indeed, food is serious business in the Crescent City and an integral part of our sense of community. Through readings, discussions, and field trips, this seminar explores the way New Orleans' restaurants, markets, food businesses and co-ops organize themselves to serve and build our community.

**Spiritual Capital****Dr. Nicholas Capaldi****Department of Business**

“Spiritual capital” describes the shared religious and spiritual beliefs that shape social, political, and economic policy. The course examines the narratives that have shaped our notions of spiritual capital in the U.S. to uncover the sources of our fundamental values and the tensions within them.

**Spinning the Planet****Dr. Robert Thomas****School of Mass Communication**

The language we use to talk about the environment shapes our attitudes toward the science, social issues, and politics surrounding environmental questions. The importance of these questions demands that we distinguish responsible communications from “spin.” This course helps students think critically about environmental issues and the language in which they are discussed.

**Media Myths, Cultural Realities****Ms. Lisa Martin****School of Mass Communication**

Much of what we know about others, ourselves, and the world comes from the media. And the media in America— newspapers, magazines, books, radio, TV, and films—are owned and controlled by a handful of corporations that shape our understanding of reality. The course teaches students to deconstruct the images packaged for us by the media, analyze the ways these images influence our perceptions, and think critically about that influence.

## **Southern Comfort, Southern Soul: A Story of Southern Identities**

**Dr. April Prince**

**Department of Music**

The south continues to maintain a distinctive set of musical and cultural identities. The various notions of the "south," however, create a sometimes complicated relationship with those outside of the region. By contextualizing and exploring the diverse musical and media landscape created within and about the south--and using New Orleans's musical soundscape as a vantage point--this course hopes to work through various understandings of southern identity and the musical sounds that have critically defined crucial aspects of the southern story.

### **Spring 2013**

**Tim Burton**

**Dr. Mary Mccay**

**Department of English**

Director and producer Tim Burton is famous for films such as *Edward Scissorhands*, *Ed Wood*, and his darkly re-imagined *Alice in Wonderland* that explore "excitement, mystery, discovery, life, and death." He is also a whimsical and disturbing artist and a writer of lyrical poetry and prose. Students will view the art, read the writings and watch the films to understand how contemporary culture speaks to the need for imaginative approaches to difficult social issues.

**Imagining New Orleans**

**Dr. Tracey Watts**

**Department of English**

Representations of New Orleans in literature, film, and political discourse offer widely divergent images of our unique city: a site of hedonistic freedom, racial tensions and discrimination, and social redemption after Katrina's devastation. The course critically examines these representations to uncover the truths, idealizations, and biases that underlie them.

**Way Down Yonder in New Orleans**

**Dr. C.W. Cannon**

**Department of English**

New Orleans has been richly mythologized throughout its history. Before Katrina, New Orleanians were often bemused by some of the wilder representations of their peculiar culture. After the storm, such conceptions were potentially harmful to the city's recovery. Beginning with journalistic accounts from the aftermath of Katrina, the course moves backwards to trace a genealogy of the myth of New Orleans in American culture.

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### **Rebellion and Revolution in China**

**Dr. Rian Thum**

**Department of History**

China is often mistakenly portrayed as a place of complete conformity. This course shatters that myth that by exploring cultures of rebellion and revolution, starting with the China’s latest uprisings and tracing traditions of disobedience backward through music, visual art, literature, artifacts, and historical writing. Through comparisons with revolutionary traditions from other parts of the world, the course invites students to examine their own notions of rebellion and revolution.

### **The Idea of America**

**Dr. Mark Fernandez**

**Department of History**

Where does America come from? What is liberty? Who and what shaped our conceptions of our country? This course will probe these questions from our colonial origins to the very recent past by looking at the intellectual history, literature, political, cultural, and religious aspects of the American past and the ideas and thinkers who helped shape our views of who we are.

### **Images of Latin America in Film**

**Dr. Leopoldo Tablante**

**Department of Languages and Cultures**

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### **Humor, Power, and Prejudice**

**Dr. Teri Bednarz**

**Department of Religious Studies**

**\*This course requires service learning.**

Humor is a universal human phenomenon that often serves as an instrument of prejudice and power. Its effects vary from light-hearted laughter to derision that ostracizes. It can be subversive, and it can reinforce the status quo. This course focuses on the social and political functions of humor with an emphasis on the role it plays in prejudice, marginalization, and social injustice.

### **New Orleans Religions: Before and After Katrina**

**Dr. Cathy Wessinger**

**Department of Religious Studies**

New Orleans' religious landscape is colorful and complex, blending the Catholic churches of its European founders with, the Jewish synagogues, Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, and Voodoo gatherings of those who later populated the city. Through readings, projects, and field trips, this course explores New Orleans' uniquely rich religious culture, how it changed after Katrina, and what endured.

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### **Men and Masculinities**

**Dr. Charles Corprew**

**Department of Psychology**

Why do some men always HAVE to win? Why is it that boys don't cry? Why are Denzel Washington, "The Rock," Benjamin Bratt, and George Clooney the prototypes for ideal masculinity? Through readings, films, and group discussions about sexuality, ethnicity, fatherhood, sports, work, and media representations, this course explores the how masculine identity is achieved, experienced and exhibited in American culture.

**Diversity in Society****Ms. Liv Newman****Department of Sociology****\*This course requires service learning.**

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**The Landscape of Race in America: Reading Historical Monuments and Landmarks****Dr. Kathleen Fitzgerald****Department of Sociology**

The monuments we erect to celebrate our culture expose the values we hold dear. This course analyzes how our historical landmarks celebrate white Euro-American culture while marginalizing the contributions of non-whites and challenges dominant U.S. narratives of freedom, justice and equality.

**Mardi Gras and the Performance of Identity****Ms. Carol Leake****Department of Visual Arts**

Mardi Gras has interacted with New Orleans' history in ways that have shaped the structure of its society. This course examines the social stratification and discrimination behind this celebratory festival that so defines the city, as the citizenry assume masks and costumes that reveal rather than conceal their identities and desires.

**Romantic Decay or Economic Exhaustion? Walking New Orleans****Ms. Barbara Brainard****Department of Visual Arts**

Our fanciful expectations of place often conflict with gritty cultural complexities, and this is especially true in New Orleans. By examining local architecture, the complex fabric that is New Orleans will come into focus. Through personal narratives based on on-site photographs, guided research and intensive critique, we will make sense of geographic influences, social and artistic tides, and often incongruous building trends and their contributions to the cities' unique identity. (Please note that classes may include walking tours up to 2 miles.)

**Love, Death, and Opera****Dr. Alice Clark****Department of Music**

How does music reflect cultural attitudes? How can it be used to shape those attitudes? This course examines issues such as gender and race, love and death, as exemplified in works such as Carmen, Don Giovanni, and West Side Story. By examining stagings and film versions we will further consider how the values embedded in works composed in the past can be reinterpreted when they are performed in the present. No musical background necessary.